

C-17 Globemasters Have Bright Future Says Top Acquisition Leader

LT. COL. ED MEMI, USAF

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. (AFPN) — The “godmother of the C-17” paid a visit to Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., to fly in the aircraft and meet with aircrews and maintainers.

The godmother of the C-17, as she jokingly calls herself, is Darleen A. Druyun, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition and Management. She is the Air Force’s top acquisition official.

“I’ve been associated with the C-17 program since it went into development in 1981. I’ve never had the opportunity to fly in a C-17, and I thought it was about time that I came down to the first C-17 operational base to see the capabilities of the airplane firsthand,” she said.

Druyun flew in a C-17 to the 2,300-acre North Auxiliary Airfield and saw a demonstration of the aircraft’s ability to airdrop, land on short runways, and its maneuverability. She also flew in the Boeing C-17 simulator and saw an aerial refueling.

“I found this very helpful when defending our budget to Congress to be able to talk firsthand about my own experiences, flying with the crew and talking to the maintenance people, and understanding what the challenges are in the program and what they like about the program. There is always room for improvement. It was a good way for me to better understand some of the issues associated with the C-17.”

The C-17 has established 22 world records in aviation and has a great future, according to Druyun. “Right now, we are on contract to buy 120 C-17s. The Air Force clearly needs to buy more C-17s when you look at the million ton miles per day that the CINC [commander in chief] is responsible for transporting,” she said.



Darleen A. Druyun
Principal Deputy Assistant
Secretary of the Air Force for
Acquisition and Management

"We are doing an analysis of what the real number should be, and it is going to clearly show that we are going to have to buy more than 120 C-17s. When you look at the ease of maintaining this airplane and its reliability, this airplane is going to be in our inventory, my guess, well beyond 40 years."

Although the C-141s are leaving Charleston this month, the aircraft may be around a bit longer than expected.

"We do have a shortfall in the area of airlift, particularly with the retirement of the C-141s. As part of our budget deliberations, we are looking at trying to extend the retirement of some C-141s to try to fill out the bathtub," Druyun said.

"We are not even able to make today's 49 million ton mile per day requirement until we deliver all C-17s and accomplish some projects on the books to improve our fleet of C-5As and Bs, which has not yet been authorized by Congress."

Air Mobility Command wants to improve the C-5 fleet by funding a re-engine program, implementing a reliability enhancement program, and other avionics improvements. "Then and only then, we might eventually fill out that bathtub."

But the big "if," is that ton mile requirements are expected to increase.

"What the latest analysis, to be released in September, will show is that we need to haul more than 49 million ton miles per day."

Druyun doesn't believe the day will ever come when the Air Force can concentrate on buying and flying a single airlifter. "I still believe there needs to be a mix of airlifters," she said. "The C-17 fulfills a very special niche that we have. When you look at what needs to be hauled in a theater, then you really need a C-130J."

Druyun said they're trying to modernize the C-130 fleet and that they have the requirement to buy additional ones as well as the stretched versions of that aircraft.

Editor's Note: Memi is with the 437th Airlift Wing Public Affairs Office, Charleston AFB, S.C. This information, released by the Air Mobility Command News Service, is in the public domain at <http://www.af.mil/news>.